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SUBJECT: BRAZZAVILLE IN BRIEF - MAY 11, 2009

11. The date has been set: Presidential elections for the Republic of the Congo (ROC) will be held July 12. Eligibility regulations were published: a candidate must be of Congolese nationality, of good morality, must have 15 years of professional experience, be between the ages of 40 and 70, and with the exception of diplomatic personnel, must have lived in the ROC for the past 24 months. Applications will be reviewed one month prior to the election by the National Election Commission (CONEL) and forwarded to the Constitutional Court if there are questions about eligibility. No formal applications have been received, including that of President Denis Sassou-Nguesso. Campaigning is permitted for the two weeks leading up to the election.

12. Housekeeping: Eleven magistrates representing various court systems (including one from the Supreme Court) were removed from office and sanctioned for abuse of power and mismanagement. Also released was Damaze Bozongo, the director general, number two, of the Ministry of Health, upon being found guilty of embezzlement of national funds.

13. Cholera resurges: At least 130 cases of cholera have been reported in the southern Pool region in the Republic of Congo since April. A case of yellow fever, the first in 43 years, has also been reported in the western Cuvette region, along the border with Gabon, according to health officials. Yellow fever vaccine costs about US\$16, a price not within the reach of a greater segment of the Congolese population.

14. Extractive Industries: In preparation for stepping up their transparency initiatives, the GROC has presented a workshop to train members of the government and civil society how to read and analyze oil production and revenues. Funded by the International Development Fund (IDA) and led by members of the French Oil Institute (Institut Francais de Pitrole) the training includes initiation to the upstream industry, legal procedures, costs, management and commercialization. The workshop is part of the World Bank Transparency and Governance Capacity Building Project for Congo.

15. Saving our trees: The European Union (EU) and the GROC signed a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) to establish policies to ensure that no illegally harvested wood products will be exported to member states of the EU. The VPA will ensure that wood imported from the ROC is taken from managed forests that benefit local communities. About half of the annual US\$330 million wood industry exports are currently purchased by Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium.

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